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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMCONGEN, LAGOS, NIGERIA

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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

MESSAGE CENTER
November 5, 1951
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SUBJECT: **Fortnightly Review - October 7 to November 3, 1951 (No Fortnightly was issued to cover separately the 2-week period October 7 to 20, 1951, because of illness of principal officer).**

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Estelle Holmes DATE 7/16/82
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POLITICAL

General Elections

Prior to the election in the Western Provinces, the Public Relations Officer wrote to the principal political parties with a request that they submit for publication lists of their candidates contending for office under their several party banners. The PRO reported that the headquarters of the Action Group sent him such a list which he published in two Lagos newspapers on the morning of the election. No other lists were received although the PRO was informed verbally by an official of the Ibadan People's Party of the candidates representing that group. The PRO had no means of identifying the affiliation of other candidates. As a consequence a period of confusion arose after the election as to just who had won, since both the Action Group and the NCNC claimed the various independent winners as their own.

The Action Group seems to have settled the discussion almost conclusively when it published on October 11th a photostatic copy of the signatures of 39 successful candidates, appended to an affirmation of their adherence to the Action Group. This apparently will constitute a clear majority in the Western House.

Claiming that it already has a solid majority in the Western House, the Action Group is now electioneering in the north and the east to "make a concrete move towards federal unity of Nigeria".

Further important developments in the Action Group took place on October 20th and 21st when a two-day conference of the executive members and the 39 successful candidates of the Group was held in Lagos. From this meeting there was released the statement that the Action Group is "preparing itself for the onerous task of governing

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a country", by setting up a Parliamentary Council and a Parliamentary Committee. It is indicated that the former will be the principal instrument of policy in regard to the party's business in the Legislative Houses, while the latter will be the executive body of the Council. The A.G. says that its President, Mr. Obafemi AWOLOWO, and its General Secretary, Chief Bode THOMAS, will be respectively, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Western House of Assembly. The party has made rules for the conduct of its business in the Regional and Central Legislatures.

In the public session the General Secretary announced that new adherents to its cause had increased its representation in the Western House to 45. It is understood that six independents declared their intention to become members of the Action Group. At the same meeting the candidates for election to the Western House from the Colony of Lagos were announced. They will be Dr. Akinola MAJA, Federal President of the almost defunct Nigerian Youth Movement, Barrister Rotime WILLIAMS, Federal Secretary of the same organization, Alhaj Jibril MARTIN, M. A. OGUN, Propaganda Secretary of the Action Group, and M. A. B. KOTOYE, Secretary of the Association of the Nigerian Railway Civil Servants. General opinion in Lagos regarding the slate is that of the 5 candidates only the popular Rotimi Williams has much of a chance against the NCNC candidates.

A later release states that the representation of the Action Group in the Western House now numbers 47. If the Action Group does in fact have the support of 47 of the 80 elected members of the Western House, the party will certainly have a clear majority regardless of the outcome of the Lagos elections. It seems probable that the definite party affiliation of each member will not be known until the time comes for the Western House to elect its representatives to the Central House of Representatives. Many of such members will probably keep quiet until they see how the political wind is blowing.

In the meantime, the A.G. states that it is going ahead with its plans for action as the majority party in the new Western House once it is instituted.

Candidacy of Dr. Azikiwe for Western House Termed "Insult" by Opposition.

The Action Group has declared that "Dr. Nnamdi AZIKIWE's intention to be voted into the Western House of Assembly is an insult to all Westerners", since the Doctor is an Ibo from the East. It is pointed out that "Zik has great audacity to pitch his camp against Westerners in their own home, to which he does not belong by birth." The A.G. concludes with a veiled threat that "if any Westerner should try to crash the East, only his cap would be sent

home to his people, and it might even be difficult to trace his remains".

Lagos General Elections November 20

The election of the five representatives from Lagos to the Western House of Assembly is scheduled for November 20 and the Action Group and the NCNC once more are busy with charge and countercharge as to the motives and methods of the other. The NCNC charges, for example, that the Action Group is endeavoring to raise £10,000 to cover campaign expenses, allegedly from a "certain African-owned Bank" which "would be made the State Bank of the Western Region if the Action Group comes to power in the West".

Local Elections

Apparent dissension within the ranks of the NCNC and its Lagos ally, the Democratic Party, had little effect on the outcome of the election of the Lagos Town Council held on October 15th. Dr. Azikiwe took Messrs. Adeleke ADEDOYIN, Adeyinka OYEKAN and Dr. Ibiyinka OLORUN-NIMBE to task for lack of party discipline in a speech in Lagos on October 13th. However, the Democratic Party won 6 of the contested 8 seats, giving it a majority of 18 seats of the 24, defeating the Area Council which is an adherent of the Action Group.

The Action Group contends that this local election is not necessarily an accurate indication of the outcome of the forthcoming general election since the ward system in Lagos tended to reduce the effectivity of the Action Group as its supporters were disproportionately thick in 2 wards and thin in the other six. The general election will not utilize this system and votes, to be cast at 42 different polling places scattered throughout the city will be pooled, the 5 candidates gaining the largest number of votes to be the winners.

Dr. Olorun-Nimbe, first Mayor of Lagos, and Mazi Mbonu OJIKE, Deputy Mayor, were returned to office at a recent meeting of the Lagos Town Council.

"Oduduwa" Meeting

An important political meeting was held between October 25th and 30th in Ijebu Ode. This meeting which is the Annual Conference of the "Egbe Omo Oduduwa" is important since the "Oduduwa", although technically a Yoruba cultural organization, is almost synonymous with the Nigerian Youth Movement and its successor the Action Group. The decisions, both published and private, reached at this conference will provide a fairly reliable idea of what may be expected of the majority party, the Action Group, when the new Western House of Assembly meets in December.

The final session adopted the recommendations of its Political Committee that "direct election into the House of Assembly is more desirable than the present indirect election". The Egbe, Yoruba cultural organization, also recommended that the representation in the House of Representatives should be split between the North, West and East respectively at 45, 33, 33 instead of the current 68, 34, 34.

Communist Publication Article

The Lagos press has reviewed favorably an article published in a recent issue of the "African News Letter", a publication of the Communist Party, concerning the new Nigerian Constitution. The contents of the article, which attacks the new constitution as being "nothing more than an imperialist tool for the further exploitation of Nigeria", are similar to some of the statements of the Nigerian political parties in their more rash moments.

NCNC Honored

The NCNC was given a minor political boost when its President, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, was invited to attend and witness the inaugural ceremonies of Dr. W. V. S. TUBMAN as the President of the Republic of Liberia, scheduled to take place in Monrovia from January 5th to 14th, 1952.

New Political Group Under Eze Announced

Announcement was made a few days ago of a new political group under the leadership of Nduka EZE, former Secretary of the Nigerian Labor Congress, Nehru IKORO and Ikenna NZIMIRO. The name of the organization was announced as the "People's Revolutionary Committee" and its published aim was to bring "radical changes" in the drive for Nigerian independence. It was reported in the press that Eze has attempted to obtain assistance from the Gold Coast's "Convention People's Party" and from African Trade Unions.

Eze has now publicly denied the existence of and his participation in a so-called "People's Revolutionary Committee". According to information received by the Consulate General, Eze may be hedging on the issue. Such an organization is reported to be in process but the name apparently is not the P.R.C. It is said that small local committees are being formed by the Eze group throughout Nigeria to be parts of a central organ of the nature originally reported.

Coker Leaves NCNC

Mr. Francis Olufolahan COKER, politically ambitious Secretary of the Union of Posts and Telegraphs Workers, and an NCNC candidate

from Lagos to the Western House, has given up his Union and political work, and has left for Britain to study law. He was displaced by the NCNC in favor of T. O. S. BENSON, and is reported to be quite upset about it. It is his intention, evidently, to return as a well-trained lawyer, intending thus to equip himself for successful action in politics later on.

There is no evidence to indicate that he is going to Eastern Germany nor that there is any deeper motive than the above for his trip.

Government Answers NCNC

The Secretary of State for the Colonies had made a point-by-point reply to a memorandum of the NCNC complaining about the new Constitution. In each instance the Secretary rejected the contentions and complaints of the NCNC and defended:

1. The method of review of the Constitution.
2. The degree of unity attained in the House of Representatives.
3. The Governor's reserve powers.
4. Voter qualifications.
5. The intention of the British Government "to insure that there should continue to be a strong and united Nigeria".

The National Secretary of the NCNC responded "We have nothing to add to (our) viewpoints and would regard our prime duty now as the early achievement of independence for our country".

Nigerian Comments on Tory Victory in Britain

With the news of the Tory election victory in England, the "West African Pilot", owned by Dr. Azikiwe, states in a front page article that with Churchill now destined to wield power again, that means "Good Night to Colonial Freedom". Churchill is painted as one who would support the "grab and hold on to what they have" policy. It is pointed out that if the Tories had been in power neither India , Ceylon, Palestine nor Burma would have been free, so "it boils down to the fact that no colonial territory can ever expect to be free with a Tory Government in power in Britain". Answering its own question as to what this augurs for Nigeria, the article states "it means that the era of the solution of our problems by constitutional means is at an end, and that our leaders and followers must be prepared for large scale civil disobedience". Azikiwe's "Pilot" goes on to state, however, in an editorial, that

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"it should be clear to the Tories, as well as to Africans themselves, that Churchill, with his line of old reliables, cannot stop the forward march of militant nationalism in West Africa". The tone of the editorial is definitely belligerent.

The "Pilot's" views are shared by various other groups, particularly the active political organizations, who point out that the Tories (1) do not have the interest of the colonies at heart, (2) are war-mongers, (3) will require more raw materials from the Colonies, (4) will put an end to Colonial freedom, etc. Communist writers also predict dire results.

More conservative elements in Nigeria see little justification for any fear, many basing their view on the feeling that "the colonials' day will be dawn in no distant future, Conservatives or no Conservatives". All groups, however, lament the passing of the Labor Party under which they felt that considerable progress had been made.

It seems obvious that most of the statements expressing fear as to the possible effects in Nigeria of the change-over in Britain, are made very largely for political purposes locally. It is "popular" to keep raising the cry of "oppression at the hands of the imperialists".

Persia in Nigeria?

Having been asked to leave Persia, British oil interests are expected by some here to turn to Nigeria where the Shell D'Arcy Petroleum Development Company is now prospecting for oil. Keen interest is being shown in this project in Britain.

One newspaper serves a warning by saying "We have nothing against the company, etc., but there are one or two things which we must get straight, now that the company is just getting started.... Nigeria reserves the right to nationalize the oil industry if and when she thinks fit, and reserves to herself the right to call off any agreement between the company and the Nigerian Government... If Britain and the company realize this fact at the outset, we are confident that the occurrence of an incident similar to the one in Persia will profitably be averted".

The Shell Company is presently conducting exploratory operations in Owerri, in Eastern Nigeria.

ECONOMIC

Possible Cocoa Development in Eastern Region

Because of Nigeria's increasing export trade in cocoa to Great Britain, an increasing interest is being taken in growing the product in the Eastern Region. At present its production is largely limited to the Western Region. It appears that there are certain fairly well defined areas in the Eastern Region where cocoa is already being grown or where soil conditions would permit of successful cultivation, but it is desired to extend such areas to include all land which can grow good cocoa.

Colonial Development Corporation Fisheries

West African Fisheries, an executive undertaking of the Colonial Development Corporation, was established to develop deep sea fishing, and, by using modern methods of distribution, to encourage the consumption of fresh fish throughout Nigeria.

A cold store and ice plant have been erected at Port Harcourt and similar facilities are in course of construction at Apapa to deal with markets in the Western Provinces. Two steam trawlers, the Strathalbyn and Strathblair, arrived from the U.K. in April, 1951, and both vessels are meantime based on Port Harcourt.

As was expected, first landings of fish were slight but, with the experience gained each trip, catches are improving. It will probably take at least twelve months before the requisite data, regarding fishing grounds and the habits of the fish are available, but results to date are said to be encouraging.

Expanding Work of Statistics Department

The Department of Statistics came into being in the latter part of 1947, and the Report of the Department from its commencement to March 31, 1951, has just been issued.

The Report reveals that the Department suffered severely from "growing pains" and it has only been in full operation for a little more than one year now. The range of tasks now dealt with by the Department, says the Report, is very wide and still expanding. Almost every aspect of social and industrial activity comes within its purview.

The work of the Department of Statistics is divided into two main categories -- tasks which are the primary concern of the Department and in respect of which it carries full responsibility throughout, and tasks which are undertaken on a servicing basis for other Departments.

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O.E.E.C. Praises W. African Marketing Boards

A report just issued by the Organization for European Economic Cooperation on investments in overseas territories, deals with Marketing Boards in Nigeria and with similar bodies in countries outside British territories in West Africa. The Marketing Boards, the report says, are in fact a form of collective saving for the farmers. This system, the report goes on to say, has been found advantageous to the farmers in that it protects the producers' earnings against the disturbances caused by fluctuations in world raw material prices. In other words, it is an excellent protection against inflation.

The report also refers to the investment by the Marketing Boards of part of their accumulated reserves, and to the assistance already given to local administrations. Particular reference was made to the Cocoa Marketing Board of Nigeria which has lent money to the Nigerian Government. This is an eloquent tribute to the work of the Nigerian Marketing Boards from the O.E.E.C., an organization that is politically independent of Nigeria.

NCMB Reduces Cocoa Trucking Charges

The Nigerian Cocoa Marketing Board's reduction in the per-ton price of lorry transport from £2-8-0 to £2, a decrease of 17%, is causing considerable comment, particularly in view of the fact that the cost of lorry operation is still increasing. Another factor causing protests is the alleged long delay in having lorries inspected for certificates of road-worthiness. Requests for augmentation of the Inspection Staff have been made in the Lagos press.

Nigerian Cotton Progress

The Nigerian Cotton Marketing Board announces that progress in raising the volume and quality of Nigerian cotton will follow the same pattern as previously, i.e. the establishment of seed multiplication centers, distribution of improved strains, improvement of methods of cultivation and of transport and marketing facilities. The Board has also approved in principle the offer of the Empire Cotton Growing Association to supply the necessary staff and organization for the establishment of a seed multiplication area in Bauchi Province, the cost of which (£15,000) will be met by the Nigeria Board. Other developments stress the importance of sending purchasing agents into the more remote areas and improvement of the roads to facilitate removal of the purchases to the British Cotton Growing Association ginneries. The Board has already agreed to contribute approximately £36,000 for road improvement schemes in the Northern Provinces.

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Inflation in Nigeria

Inflation continues to be a pressing problem in all of Nigeria. Its effects are exaggerated in the capital seaport, Lagos, particularly in the price of foodstuffs. It seems sure that on the average throughout the country the cost of living is still rising. Even the agricultural northern areas find the cost of Guinea Corn, Millet and Rice on the upswing. Apart from a number of provinces in the North, food prices were distinctly higher than those of July, 1950. This was especially true of the East and West and the Niger, Plateau and Ilorin Provinces in the North. Further rises may be anticipated as a result of the recent increase in the purchase price of cocoa.

Cocoa Board Finances Roads in Abadan

Since 1949 there have been completed a number of cocoa roads, within Abadan Province, and several are in daily use by transport owners, The roads are maintained by the Native Administrations. The costs are borne by them and the Cocoa Marketing Board. The total mileage of this road program is approximately 110, and all the roads will have been completed with funds provided by the Cocoa Marketing Board.

Tin Resources Decreasing

The press reports that Nigeria's tin resources are being exhausted and that the grade of ore is deteriorating. It was stated that while formerly the return was one pound of tin to the cubic yard, the rate is now only about four-fifths of a pound. It was pointed out that the prospects of finding large scale additional reserves are slight. Tin is an important export item from Nigeria and the industry employs some 55,000 workers.

Fashola Agricultural Center

The Agricultural Development Center at Fashola, Oyo Province, has now been augmented by the addition of an experimental tractor unit farm of 600 acres. The work will be devoted to development technique, testing of equipment and training of tractor operators and supervisors.

The distribution of bulls from the Ndama multiplication herd at the Fashola Stock Farm has continued andthe herd is now reaching the stage where the limited distribution of females will be possible.

LABOR

Transport Strike Threatened

The Western Transport Owners Union decided, at a meeting in Ibadan on October 27, 1951, to withdraw all its motor vehicles from the roads. On November 5, if the Government failed to meet its complaint, which has to do with alleged inefficiency of the Motor Testing Officer in Abadan, and insufficiency of Testing Officers in the Western Region. It is reported that over 500 vehicles are laid off at present. The proposed strike could have had considerable effect in moving crops to seaboard.

On November 2, the Union decided to suspend withdrawal of its trucks on November 5, following an interview with British officials, who assured the Union that the Government was ready to consider their complaints immediately, and name additional testing officers.

Quarterly Review Reports on Four Trade Union Disputes

The quarterly review of the industrial relations in this country published by the Department of Labour shows that four trade unions declared trade disputes during the previous quarter. The first union listed was the Pharmacists which declared a dispute in connection with overtime payment, regrading and engagement of pensioners. The dispute reached a stalemate which necessitated a fact-finding commission under the chairmanship of Sir Kofoworola Abayomi.

The Nigerian Union of Nurses declared a dispute on promotions and scholarship awards and a conciliator was appointed to resolve the deadlock.

The Public Utility Technical and General Workers Union and the Railway Workers Union also declared trade disputes. Two unions, within the period, went on strike following failure to meet their demands.

Labor Leader Banned

The ban imposed on Mr. M.A.O. Imoudu, President of the Railway Workers Union, by the Nigerian Railways, which prohibits him from entering on Railway premises, continues to take up considerable space in the Nigerian press. He was banned because of alleged slanderous statements concerning railway officials (who are also government officials). It is understood now that the ban is to be lifted following an apology by Union on behalf of Imoudu to the Nigerian Railway.

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Protest by Dock Workers

The Amalgamated Union of Dock Workers has protested to the press against the shipping companies' custom of recruitment of dock labor through private contractors. The union is campaigning for the establishment of a local Maritime Board where such matters as wages and hours, elimination of middle men in purveyance of labor, medical compensation and improvement of physical setup on the Lagos side of the harbor may be negotiated.

OTHER

Tour of Chief Secretary

The Acting Head of the Nigerian Government, Mr. A.E.T. Benson, returned to Lagos on October 14, 1951, from a tour of two weeks to the Plateau and Niger Provinces.

British Information Director Visits Lagos

Mr. C. Y. Carstairs, C.M.G., Director of Information Services in the Colonial Office, visited the United States Information Center in Lagos, October 11. He is currently touring British West African territories.

Mr. Carstairs and Mr. Harold Cooper, the Public Relations Officer for Nigeria who accompanied Mr. Carstairs, and the U.S. Information Officer discussed the work of USIE in Nigeria. Mr. Carstairs, who visited the press, motion picture, distribution and library sections of the center, said he was impressed with the way the services are administered. He was particularly impressed by the pictorial magazines in the "Living America" series and motion picture: "The Maine Sardine" which was shown during his visit.

Educational Standards Study Made

A comparative study, completed by five educational officers in Nigeria at the behest of the Government, of comparative standards in Nigerian schools has recently been released. This study was necessitated by the varying criteria applied to the problem of advancement through the various grades or "forms", a reflection of the sociological divisions between the North, the East and the West of Nigeria. This report, which attempts to establish parallel standards and terminologies in the various regions, is an important step in the eventual standardization of the schooling system throughout Nigeria.

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Muslims Adopt New Educational Program

Muslims and their supporters in Lagos, through the Committee for Muslim Education in Nigeria, have forwarded a petition to the Nigerian Government demanding more educational facilities. The petition which was approved during a mass meeting October 21 in the Ansar-Ud-Deen Schoolroom, Alakoro, Lagos, calls for the implementation of three proposals:

1. Practical encouragement to Muslims to open as many Primary Schools as are necessary for the training of Muslim children with the Government financing 50 per cent of the cost of building such schools and placing them immediately on the Assisted List.

2. Establishment by the Government, or practical encouragement to the Muslims to establish at least, three secondary schools in Lagos, two for boys and one for girls, and one each in Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ife, Ijebu-Ode, Ilesha, Oyo, and Benin City.

3. Establishment by the Government in the North of secondary schools in such places like Sokoto, Kano, Maiduguri, Ilorin, Okine, Katsina, and Bidi as well as girls' secondary schools and more teacher training institutions.

The petition appears to echo the sentiment of leading Nigerian Muslims who have recently charged the Government with neglecting members of their faith in the allocation of scholarship and training course awards and in the general allocation of educational facilities. Provision of educational facilities for all, irrespective of creed or caste is, these leaders maintain, Government's responsibility.

During the past few months the Nigerian press has played up the story of certain scholarships to be offered Nigerians by the University of Al Azhar, the University of Fouad and the University of Farouk in Egypt. In this connection Dr. Muhammed Alfahham, Professor in the University of Alhazhar, Cairo, and the University of Faruk Awal, Alexandria, has been touring Nigeria since early in June, studying the conditions and needs of the Muslims in regard to their education and religion. The Government has now announced, however, that "The information received shows that the University of Al Azhar does not confer degrees in modern subjects such as medicine; and that in the case of the other two universities such degrees and qualifications are not of the standard required for entry into the Senior Service, nor will holders of medical degrees of these universities be qualified to practise in Nigeria".

The effect of this announcement will lessen the desirability

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The effect of this announcement will lessen the desirability of these scholarships. However, the prestige of a graduate of one of these universities will still be high among the Muslim element, a large part of which seems to be fairly independent of the Government and government jobs.

Construction of University College Hospital Will Begin in December

Construction of the new teaching hospital for medical students of the University College, Ibadan, will start toward the end of December, Dr. Kenneth Mellanby, Principal of the College, announced during a recent visit to Lagos.

The hospital will accommodate 500 beds and is expected to be completed sometime in 1952. Plans are for the hospital to turn out an average of 50 trained nurses yearly with this number gradually increasing.

The educational qualification for entry into the Nursing School is Middle Six but a preliminary Training Course for students with Middle Four certificates is planned.

The Nigerian Government has made a grant of £1.5 million toward the construction and equipment of the hospital which will be located three miles from Ibadan town.

This announcement by Dr. Mellanby is another indication of the scope of the huge expansion program contemplated for the College.

A. W. Childs
Consul General